GLORY ALL AROUND

DECEMBER 4, 1994

PRESBYTERIAN HOME, ELLIOT CHAPEL

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SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 28:16-20

EXODUS 3:1-12

"...REMOVE THE SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND." -EXODUS 3:5 (NRSV)

TWO WEEKS AGO OUR CHILDREN'S CHOIR WAS SINGING. IT WAS A SPLENDID OCCASION.

KAREN MAURER, OUR DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, TOLD ME ABOUT SOMETHING ONE OF THE YOUNGSTERS, STUART WHITMORE. STUART IS FIVE. HE HAS BEEN HERE BEFORE; HE'S ONE OF OUR REGULARS, BUT SOMETHING SEEMED DIFFERENT TO HIM THIS TIME. PERHAPS IT WAS THE EARLY EVENING HOUR. IN ANY EVENT, STUART WAS MESMERIZED. HE LOOKED UP AND AROUND AND TOOK IT ALL IN AND LEANED OVER TO HIS MOTHER AND WHISPERED... "SO HIGH! SO, SOOOO HIGH!"

HIS MOTHER NODDED, AND STUART KEPT LOOKING UP AND AROUND AND ALL ABOUT AND LEANED OVER WITH SOMETHING FURTHER TO SAY. SHE LEANED DOWN AND STUART WHISPERED..."GOD IS HERE."

GOD IS HERE. IT'S A TOPIC THOSE OF

US WHO ARE ASSOCIATED WITH FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND ALSO ELLIOT CHAPEL AT THE PRESBYTERIAN HOME HAVE BEEN THINKING A LOT ABOUT RECENTLY.

WE ARE FOND OF SAYING THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT A BUILDING. THE CHURCH IS PEOPLE. BUT THE FACT IS WE DON'T HAVE MUCH EXPERIENCE BEING THE CHURCH WITHOUT A BUILDING. WE'VE BEEN HEAVILY INTO REAL ESTATE FOR CENTURIES, AFTER ALL. SO MUCH SO, THAT THE WORD "CHURCH" ITSELF, WHICH ORIGINALLY MEANT "A COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE" NOW, IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH, HAS COME TO MEAN THE BUILDING THE PEOPLE USE IN ORDER TO BE THE CHURCH. BUT WE STILL LIKE TO TELL OURSELVES THAT THE CHURCH ISN'T THE BUILDING, AND THAT WE COULD EASILY BE THE CHURCH WITHOUT THE BUILDING BECAUSE THE CHURCH, AFTER ALL, IS THE PEOPLE.

BUT IT'S NOT QUITE THAT SIMPLE. SOMETHING HAPPENS TO THE BUILDING THE PEOPLE BUILD IN ORDER TO BE THE CHURCH. IN THE FIRST PLACE THEY DESIGN IT TO REMIND THEM OF IMPORTANT IDEAS; SOMETIMES THEY DESIGN IT TO BE HIGH AND MYSTERIOUS AND AWE-INSPIRING; SOMETIMES THEY BUILD IT TO BE CLEAN AND SIMPLE AND ORDERLY. AND SOMETIMES THEY DESIGN IT EXTRAVAGANTLY, LUSH AND COLORFUL, WITH FAT LITTLE CHERUBS SINGING ALL OVER THE CEILING. THEY INVEST THE BUILDING WITH IDEAS THAT REMIND THEM OF WHO THEY BELIEVE GOD IS AND WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THE RELATIONSHIP IS ALL ABOUT.

AND THEN, OVER THE YEARS, THE THINGS THE PEOPLE DO IN THE BUILDING BEING THE CHURCH, FURTHER ENDEARS THE SPACE TO THEM. IT BECOMES, TO THEM,

SACRED SPACE, AND THEY RESPECT IT AND BEHAVE REVERENTLY AND ARE DEFERENTIAL WHEN THEY ENTER IT. I'LL BET YOU'D HAVE NO TROUBLE REMEMBERING IN DETAIL THE CHURCH OF YOUR CHILDHOOD, SACRED SPACE FOR YOU.

WHAT MAKES A PLACE SACRED? IS IT ONLY THE WAY IT LOOKS? IS IT SACRED BECAUSE IT IS GOTHIC AND HAS PEWS IN IT?

ONE OF THE OLDEST RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF ALL IS THAT NATURE IS SACRED.

THE ANCIENT HEBREWS PUT A SPECIAL TWIST ON THE OLD IDEA. A PLACE BECOMES HOLY, NOT BECAUSE IT POSSESSES INHERENTLY THE CHARACTER OF HOLINESS, BUT BECAUSE OF SOME DIVINE ACTIVITY, SOME REVELATION OF GOD, OR TRUTH, OR GOODNESS, OR BEAUTY, AND SOME FAITHFUL HUMAN

RESPONSE. SPACE BECOMES IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENS IN IT OR ON IT.

JUNE 6, 1994 - WAS THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALLIED INVASION OF FRANCE. IT WAS RAINING WHEN I FINALLY MADE IT TO THE AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETERY IN NORMANDY, ON A BLUFF OVERLOOKING WHAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW AS OMAHA BEACH.

I WAS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN JUNE OF 1944. MY MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE WAS A JACKET ON WHICH MY MOTHER HAD SEWN THE MILITARY INSIGNIA SENT TO ME BY TWO UNCLES - BOTH OF WHOM WERE SUBSEQUENTLY KILLED - AND TWO COUSINS. I RECALL THE DAY, D-DAY, AND MY PARENTS' EXCITEMENT AND THEIR TEARS. EACH HAD A BROTHER AND A NEPHEW INVOLVED. AND SO, AS IN THE CASE WITH MILLIONS OF PEOPLE, IT WAS

SOMETHING OF A RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE FOR ME.

OVER THE YEARS I HAVE READ AS MUCH AS IS POSSIBLE TO READ ABOUT IT. I KNEW THE CONTOURS OF EACH BEACH, THE CLIFFS AT POINT-DU-HOC. BUT NOTHING I HAD READ, NO PICTURE I HAD SEEN, PREPARED ME FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CEMETERY; YOU'VE SEEN IT TOO, IN PICTURES PERHAPS: ROW UPON ROW UPON ROW OF SMALL, SIMPLE CROSSES AND STARS OF DAVID, GLEAMING WHITE AGAINST THE GRASS OF NORMANDY.

I WAS STANDING ON HOLY GROUND; A PLACE MADE SACRED BECAUSE OF SELFLESS COURAGE, A HOLY PLACE BECAUSE YOUNG MEN, FACED WITH MORTAL DANGER, DECIDED IN AN INSTANT TO GIVE ALL THEY HAD TO GIVE. PLACES BECOME HOLY BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENS IN THEM OR ON THEM.

THE STORY OF MOSES IS THE PROTOTYPE. MOSES, SON OF A HEBREW SLAVE, IS BROUGHT UP IN THE COURT OF PHARAOH, RISES THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, DISGUISING HIS JEWISHNESS, AND ONE DAY ATTACKS AND KILLS AN EGYPTIAN GUARD WHOM HE CATCHES IN THE ACT OF BEATING A HEBREW SLAVE. MOSES RUNS FOR HIS LIFE, ENDS UP IN THE WILDERNESS OF MIDIAN, MEETS A YOUNG WOMAN, MARRIES, IS WELCOMED INTO HIS FATHER-IN-LAW'S BUSINESS, AND SETTLES DOWN. IN FACT, HE'S TENDING JETHRO'S SHEEP, WHEN HE SEES A BURNING BUSH, IS FILLED WITH AWE AND FEAR, TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AND HEARS A VOICE INSTRUCTING HIM TO REMOVE HIS SHOES BECAUSE HE'S STANDING ON HOLY GROUND.

THIS SPACE, ELLIOT CHAPEL, IS HOLY

GROUND BECAUSE OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE IN THE PAST AND THE LOVE AND FAITH AND COMMITMENT AND SACRIFICE AND GENEROSITY OF THOSE WHO HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE.

THIS SPACE, REPRESENTS THE HIGHEST AND MOST NOBLE INTENT OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HOME AND ALL THOSE DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS _____ HAVE INVESTED THEIR LOVE AND LEADERSHIP AND RESOURCES IN THIS INSTITUTION.

AND THIS IS HOLY GROUND BECAUSE OF WHAT WILL CONTINUE TO HAPPEN HERE IN THE YEARS AHEAD, AS MEN AND WOMEN GATHER HERE TO WORSHIP AND SING GOD'S PRAISES, AND TO HEAR GOD'S WORD, TO SHARE THE BREAD AND CUP OF COMMUNION, TO CELEBRATE THE LIVES OF DEAR FRIENDS, AND TO COME HERE TO SIT QUIETLY AND OFFER PRAYERS OF GRATITUDE AND INTERCESSION AND PETITION.

AND THIS ELLIOT CHAPEL, AS IS THE

CASE WITH ALL RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS, WILL REMIND US AND FUTURE GENERATIONS THAT BECAUSE OF THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST INTO THE WORLD ALL SPACE BECOMES SACRED, AND GOD'S LOVE AND MERCY ARE NOW REALITIES OPERATIVE IN HISTORY, IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS EVEN. THIS SPACE REMINDS US THAT GOD'S GLORY IS ALL AROUND US.

THAT'S ONE OF MY FAVORITE PHRASES AND IDEAS. <u>GLORY ALL AROUND</u>. IT COMES, OF COURSE, FROM THE CHRISTMAS STORY AS LUKE TELLS IT.

SHEPHERDS ARE IN THE FIELD, LIKE MOSES IN MIDIAN, TENDING THEIR SHEEP, AND SUDDENLY SOMETHING HAPPENS THAT THEY CAN'T EVEN DESCRIBE. SOME THINK IT IS A BRILLIANT LIGHT SHINING. OTHERS HEAR A VOICE SPEAKING: "DON'T BE AFRAID. THERE IS GOOD NEWS FOR ALL PEOPLE!" STILL OTHERS HEAR BEAUTIFUL, GLORIOUS

SINGING - "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND ON EARTH PEACE!" "THERE WAS GLORY ALL AROUND ..."

IT'S AN INTERESTING WORD "GLORY" IS. THERE ARE ACTUALLY 25 DIFFERENT HEBREW WORDS WHICH GET TRANSLATED BY THE SINGLE ENGLISH WORD "GLORY." GOD'S GLORY IS, AS BEST AS I KIND OF UNDERSTAND, IT -- "THE IMPACT OF GOD'S PRESENCE ... THE "LIGHT STUFF," NOVELIST TOM WOLFE CALLED IT.

HOWEVER, YOU DEFINE IT, I KNOW YOU'VE EXPERIENCED IT.

I THINK I EXPERIENCE GLORY ALL AROUND WHEN I VISIT THE IMPRESSIONISTS AT THE ART INSTITUTE AND TAKE MY TIME AFTER I'VE SLOWLY WALKED AROUND THE ROOM FULL OF RENOIRS AND MONETS AND VANGOGHS

AND PICCASOS AND THEN JUST SIT ON THE LITTLE BEVEL IN THE MIDDLE AND KIND OF JUST FLOAT THERE IN THE GLORY ...

I THINK -- I KNOW -- I EXPERIENCE IT WHEN I HEAR PROFOUNDLY BEAUTIFUL MUSIC - AT ORCHESTRA HALL, OR DURING WORSHIP - OR SOMETIMES ON THE CAR RADIO.

I'VE CONCLUDED THAT GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL KNEW WHAT GLORY SOUNDED LIKE. HE WROTE "MESSIAH" IN 24 DAYS, AUGUST 22 TO SEPTEMBER 14, 1741. HIS SERVANT CAME INTO THE ROOM JUST AS THE COMPOSER FINISHED THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS, FOUND HIM SEATED AT THE WRITING TABLE WITH TEARS STREAMING DOWN HIS CHEEKS AND HANDEL IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID, "I DID SEE ALL HEAVEN BEFORE ME, AND THE GREAT GOD HIMSELF." HANDEL, NEW WHAT GLORY ALL AROUND SOUNDED LIKE.

I EXPERIENCED GOD'S GLORY RECENTLY WHEN A FRIEND OF MINE CAME INTO A HOSPITAL ROOM AT A CRITICAL MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF MY OWN FAMILY AND WE HELD HANDS AND HE PRAYED -- AND THERE WAS GLORY ALL AROUND.

THERE ARE A LOT OF REASONS TO LOVE THE CHRISTMAS STORY. AND AMONG THEM IS THAT WHEN JESUS WAS BORN IT WAS IN A BARN - A COW STALL: AND THAT THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WAS ON A HILLSIDE, WHERE ROUGH, WORKING PEOPLE WERE AT THEIR TASKS ... ANGELS CAME AND SANG AND GLORY SHONE ALL AROUND.

IN THAT ELOQUENT AND MYSTERIOUS GESTURE GOD WAS SAYING THAT OUR SACRED SPACES - ELLIOT CHAPEL, FOURTH PRESBYTE-

RIAN CHURCH, THE CATHEDRALS, AND SANCTUARIES WE BUILD ARE HOLD BECAUSE OF WHAT WE DO IN THEM, BUT THEY ARE ALSO VISIBLE, TANGIBLE REMINDERS THAT GOD IS PRESENT IN THE LIFE OF THE WORLD, ON MICHIGAN AVENUE AND ON THIS LOVELY CAMPUS ... THERE IS GLORY ALL AROUND.

AND GOD WAS SAYING THAT IT IS IN NORMAL EVERYDAY ACTIVITY - AS WE LIVE TOGETHER AND WORK TOGETHER AND EAT AND DRINK AND TALK TOGETHER -- THAT IT IS THERE, IN NORMAL HUMAN ACTIVITY THAT GOD COMES TO BLESS US AND BE WITH US AND HOLD US UP AND GIVE US STRENGTH. THERE IS GLORY ALL AROUND.

AND GOD WAS SAYING , IN THIS MOST ELOQUENT GESTURE, THAT THERE ARE ULTIMATE ISSUES ABOUT US THAT ARE NOW RE-

SOLVED: THAT AMONG ALL THE THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT IN THIS LIFE, ALL THE ANXIETIES AND UNCERTAINTIES, THERE IS ONE WE MAY NOT PUT TO REST AND THAT IS THE MATTER OF OUR OWN ULTIMATE DESTINY.

WE ARE LOVED ULTIMATELY AND ETERNALLY THIS BIRTH SAYS. THERE IS GLORY ALL AROUND -- ALL AROUND THE DAYS AND YEARS OF OUR OWN LIVES.

FOR THE FRONTISPIECE TO THE LAST VOLUME OF POETRY PUBLISHED DURING HIS LIFE-TIME, ROBERT FROST WROTE SOMETHING WHICH IS HAUNTING:

"BUT GOD'S OWN DESCENT
INTO FLESH WAS MEAN
AS A DEMONSTRATION
THAT THE SUPREME MERIT
LAY IN RISKING SPIRIT

IN SUBSTANTIATION.

SPIRIT ENTERS FLESH

AND FOR ALL ITS WORTH

CHARGES INTO EARTH

IN BIRTH AFTER BIRTH

EVER FRESH AND FRESH ..."

[IN THE CLEARING]

THIS LOVELY CHAPEL WILL CONTINUE TO HE A REMINDER OF ALL THAT .... GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE WORLD - GOD'S LOVE FOR EACH OF US; GOD'S SPIRIT ENTERING LIFE -- IN BIRTH AFTER BIRTH, EVER FRESH AND FRESH." IT WILL BE FOR YOU WHO RESIDE HERE; FOR ALL OF US WHO WORK HERE AND VISIT HERE -- AND FOR ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL COME AFTER US THAT THIS IS HOLY GROUND AND THAT THERE IS GLORY ALL AROUND. AMEN.

GLORY ALL AROUND

December 4, 1994

Ninetieth Anniversary
Presbyterian Home, Evanston, Illinois

Rededication of Elliot Chapel

John M. Buchanan, Pastor
Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago

Scripture

Matthew 28:16-20
Exodus 3:1-12

"...Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." -Exodus 3:5 (NRSV)

What a grand occasion this is! I am honored to have been invited to be with you to help observe the 90th anniversary of the good and faithful ministry of the Presbyterian Home and to help rededicate this lovely chapel.

It is always good to be at the Presbyterian Home. We're glad you are here. We regard you as partners in ministry and, as always, it is good to see so many familiar and friendly faces.

We reopened the sanctuary of Fourth Presbyterian Church this morning as well. For six months we have been worshiping under scaffolding, on folding chairs, with temporary lights and sound equipment and lots of dust and dirt. Today, it all came together and we worshiped for the very first time in our restored space.

A few weeks before the scaffolding went up our children's choir was singing for worship. It was a splendid occasion.

Karen Maurer, our Director of Education, told me about something one of the youngsters, Stuart Whitmore said. He's one of our regulars, but something seemed different to him this time. Stuart was mesmerized. He looked up and around at the high ceiling, the chandeliers, the carved angels overhead, took it all in and leaned over to his mother and whispered... "So high! So, soooo high!"

His mother nodded, and Stuart kept looking up and around and all about and leaned over with something further to say. She leaned down and Stuart whispered -- "God is here."

It's a topic we've been thinking about as our sacred space is restored, cleaned, and treated a little irreverently.

We are fond of saying that the church is not a building. The church is people. But the fact is we don't have much experience being the church without a building. We've been heavily into real estate for centuries, after all. So much so, that the word "church" itself, which originally meant "a community of people" now, in contemporary English, has come to mean the building the people use in order to be the church. But we still like to tell ourselves that the church isn't the building, and that we could easily be the church without the building because the church, after all, is the people.

But it's not quite that simple. Something happens to the building the people build in order to be the church. In the first place they design it to remind them of important ideas; sometimes they design it to be high and mysterious and awe-inspiring; sometimes they build it to be clean and simple and orderly. And sometimes they design it extravagantly, lush and colorful, with fat little cherubs singing all over the ceiling. They invest the building with ideas that remind them of who they believe God is and who they are and what the relationship is all about.

And then, over the years, the things the people do in the building being the church, further endears the space to them. It becomes, to them, sacred space, and they respect it and behave reverently and are deferential when they enter it. I'll bet you'd have no trouble remembering in detail the church of your childhood, sacred space for you.

What makes a place sacred? Is it only the way it looks? Is it sacred because it is Gothic and has pews in it?

One of the oldest religious ideas of all is that nature is sacred.

The ancient Hebrews put a special twist on the old idea. A place becomes holy, not because it possesses inherently the character of holiness, but because of some divine activity, some revelation of God, or truth, or goodness, or beauty, and some faithful human response. Space becomes important because of what happens in it or on it.

June 6, 1994 was the fiftieth anniversary of the Allied invasion of France. It was raining when I finally made it to the American Military Cemetery in Normandy, on a bluff overlooking what we have come to know as Omaha Beach.

I was in elementary school in June of 1944. My most precious treasure was a jacket on which my mother had sewn the military insignia sent to me by two uncles -- both of whom were subsequently killed. I recall the day, D-Day, and my parents' excitement and their tears. Each had a brother and a nephew involved. And so, as in the case with millions of people, it was something of a religious pilgrimage for me.

Over the years I have read as much as is possible to read about it. I knew the contours of each beach, the cliffs at Point-du-Hoc. But nothing I had read, no picture I had seen, prepared me for the experience of the cemetery; you've seen it too, in pictures perhaps: row upon row upon row of small, simple crosses and Stars of David, gleaming white against the grass of Normandy.

I was standing on Holy Ground; a place made sacred because of selfless courage, a holy place because young men, faced with mortal danger, decided in an instant to give all they had to give. Places become holy because of what happens in them or on them.

This space, Elliot Chapel, is Holy Ground because of what has happened here in the past and the love and faith and commitment and sacrifice and generosity of those who have made it possible.

This space, represents the highest and most noble intent of the founders of the Presbyterian Home and all those down through the years who have invested their love and leadership and resources in this institution.

And this is Holy Ground because of what will continue to happen here in the years ahead, as men and women gather here to worship and sing God's praises, and to hear God's word, to share the bread and cup of communion, to celebrate the lives of dear friends, and to come here to sit quietly and offer prayers of gratitude and intercession and petition.

And this Elliot Chapel, as is the case with all religious buildings, will remind us and future generations that because of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world all space becomes sacred, and God's love and mercy are now realities operative in history, in our own relationships even. This space reminds us that God's glory is all around us.

That's one of my favorite phrases and ideas. <u>Glory All Around</u>. It comes, of course, from the Christmas story as Luke tells it.

Shepherds are in the field, tending their sheep, and suddenly something happens that they can't even describe. Some think it is a brilliant light shining. Others hear a voice speaking: "Don't be afraid. There is good news for all people!" Still others hear beautiful, glorious singing -- "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace!" There was glory all around ...

It's an interesting word "glory" is. There are actually 25 different Hebrew words which get translated by the single English word "glory." God's glory is, as best as I kind of understand, it -- "the impact of God's presence," the "right stuff," novelist Tom Wolfe called it.

The story of Moses is the prototype. Moses, son of a Hebrew slave, is brought up in the court of Pharaoh, rises through the ranks of the royal household, disguising his Jewishness, and one day attacks and kills an Egyptian guard whom he catches in the act of beating a Hebrew slave. Moses runs for his life, ends up in the wilderness of Midian, meets a young woman, marries, is welcomed into his father-in-law's business, and settles down. In fact, he's tending Jethro's sheep, when he sees a burning bush, is filled with awe and fear, takes a closer look and hears a voice instructing him to remove his shoes because he's standing on Holy Ground.

However, you define glory, I know you've experienced it.

I think I experience glory all around when I visit the impressionists at the Art Institute and take my time after I've slowly walked around the room full of Renoirs and Monets and VanGoghs and Piccasos and then just sit on the little bench in the middle and just float there in the glory ...

I think -- I know -- I experience it when I hear profoundly beautiful music at Orchestra Hall, or during worship - or sometimes on the car radio.

I've concluded that George Frederick Handel knew what glory sounded like. He wrote "Messiah" in 24 days, August 22 to September 14, 1741. His servant came into the room just as the composer finished the Hallelujah Chorus, found him seated at the writing table with tears streaming down his cheeks and Handel is reported to have said, "I did see all heaven before me, and the great God himself." Handel, knew what glory all around sounded like.

I experienced God's glory recently when a friend of mine came into a hospital room at a critical moment in the life of my own family and we held hands and he prayed -- and there was glory all around.

There are a lot of reasons to love the Christmas story. And among them is that when Jesus was born it was in a barn - a cow stall: and that the first Christmas celebration was on a hillside, where rough, working people were at their tasks ... Angels came and sang and glory shone all around.

In that eloquent and mysterious gesture God was saying that our sacred spaces -- Elliot Chapel, Fourth Presbyterian Church: the cathedrals, and sanctuaries we build are holy because of what we do in them, but they are also visible, tangible reminders that God is present in the life of the world, on Michigan Avenue and on this lovely campus ... There is glory all around.

And God was saying that it is in normal everyday activity -- as we live together, and work together, and eat and drink and talk together; that it is here, in normal human activity that God comes to bless us, and be with us, and hold us up and give us

strength. There is glory all around.

And God was saying, in this most eloquent gesture, that there are ultimate issues about us that are now resolved: that among all the things to worry about in this life, all the anxieties and uncertainties, there is one we may now put to rest and that is the matter of our own ultimate destiny.

We are loved ultimately and eternally, this birth says. There is glory all around -- all around the days and years of our own lives.

From the frontispiece to the last volume of poetry published during his life-time, Robert Frost wrote something which is haunting:

> "But God's own descent
> Into flesh was meant
> As a demonstration
> That the supreme merit
> Lay in risking spirit
> In substantiation.
> Spirit enters flesh
> And for all its worth
> Charges into earth
> In birth after birth
> Ever fresh and fresh ..."
> [In the Clearing]

This wonderful institution, serving here for 90 years is holy -- because of what happens here, the love and compassion, the good and healthy certainty, the nurturing and caring -- all of it expressive of God's love in the birth of Jesus Christ.

This lovely chapel will continue to be a reminder of all that .... God's presence in the world, God's love for each of us; God's spirit entering life -- "in birth after birth, ever fresh and fresh." It will be a reminder for you who reside here; for all who work here, for those of us who invest our time and energy as volunteers and those of us who visit here, and for all the men and women who will come after us, that this is Holy Ground and that there is Glory All Around.

Amen.